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ABSTRACT

Characteristics and job expectations of students taking courses in the field of higher education were investigated, along with student perceptions of their programs. Findings may be helpful in making curricula responsive to student expectations and in developing marketing/recruitment strategies. Eleven questions that relate to client identification for marketing programs in the field of higher education framed the development of the survey form. The survey examined the background of students in the areas of: education, demographics, occupation, perceptions of their programs, and career goals. Responses were received from 18 higher education doctoral programs. Information was obtained on: enrollment in higher education administration programs by sex and race (Caucasian or minority); undergraduate majors of students; grade point average for bachelor's and master's degrees, scores for Graduate Record Exam and Miller Analogy Test; occupational background; concentration (higher education administration, student personnel work, other); geographic accessibility to the program; financing of studies, ways that students learned about the program; skills students want to develop; strengths/weaknesses of the program; and ultimate career goal (faculty, administrator, president, other). The findings are compared to two previous studies. (SW)

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A PROFILE OF STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A MARKETING APPROACH

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the
Study of Higher Education, San Antonio, February 1986

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the professional programs offered at the doctoral level, education has been experiencing one of the most rapid rates of decline in enrollments. This is partially due to a decrease in employment opportunities for graduates, a decline in society's respect of the profession, and greater opportunities in other areas. While the doctoral programs in Higher Education have not seen such a decline as other speciality areas in schools of education, there is some evidence that this speciality area is now beginning to follow these enrollment trends. Among other indicators, many departments are being combined with other speciality areas when schools of education are reorganized.

These trends however are reversible for programs in Higher Education because many of the conditions that have influenced the other areas of education, e.g., less job opportunities, lower salaries, and decreased opportunities for promotion, do not apply to higher education administration. In fact, as institutions of

higher education come under increasing stress, trained administrators are seeing greater opportunities as the more traditional route to administration through the faculty is seen as a less successful way to train management for an institution.

While the overall prospects of Higher Education programs are good, the marketing of these programs has at best been accidental. The distinction among program orientations as described in the 1974 pivotal work by Dressel and Mayhew are now more indistinguishable and certainly more programs are practitioner oriented (Basil, 1980).

This lack of consistency in purpose is complicated by other factors. Because the speciality area of Higher Education is relatively new as compared with other education areas, it lacks a broad research base for developing its curriculum. This is reflected in two recent studies that demonstrate the curricular variety of Higher Education programs (Crosson and Nelson, 1984; Grace, 1984). Because so much uniqueness and idiosyncrasies exist, a description of certain aspects in those programs with large enrollments will yield indications of any consistencies in general terms and help identify areas of marketing concerns for these programs.

Two frameworks underlie this study: marketing theory and curriculum development theory. First, this study draws heavily upon marketing assumptions. For purpose of reference the following principles of marketing are enumerated:

- 1) There is a viable product to sell;

- 2) Current clients are representative of future clients;
- 3) It is useful to know the demographic characteristics of these clients in order to market the product successfully;
- 4) It is essential to know what client expectation is in order that the product may be developed and marketing according to those specifications; and
- 5) If the clients served are not the market intended by the producer, a decision must be made whether or not to go after another market or to modify the existing product.

Curriculum development theory is related to these marketing principles at least in part. In considering whether the curriculum of these programs influences client/student fit, the following three considerations are at work:

- 1) The curriculum must reflect both the segments of the body of knowledge of the profession and the up-to-dateness of that knowledge;
 - 2) Evaluation of these expectations is in part met by the evaluation of the employers who will hire the graduates or products of these programs; and
 - 3) Student expectations must be addressed in terms of satisfaction and therefore continuation in programs.
- This last premise must be weighted in the light of the first two. This study focuses on the first and third premises.

The purpose of this study is to gain a clearer image of what types of students are taking courses in Higher Education programs, to describe some of their expectations in terms of job goals, and to gain a beginning understanding of their perceptions of the programs and that relationship to those career goals. With this knowledge, programs in Higher Education can more successfully evaluate their curricula and bring it more in line with student desires and expectations. These data will also help programs to develop marketing strategies to attract students to their programs. As Hodgkinson reminds us:

Marketing is not selling. Rather, it involves identifying clienteles and service areas, rigorously assessing the kinds of services the organization offers, gauging the competition's strengths and weaknesses, and positioning the organization in a desirable niche, given the competition. The skills of all the social sciences are relevant to marketing, particularly for higher education....(in Jedamus, 1980)

It is felt that client identification for marketing programs in Higher Education could be improved if the following questions could be answered?

- o What is the academic background of Higher Education program students?

- o What are the employment histories of these students?

- o How were students attracted to these programs?

- o What are the limitations on the students' involvement in the programs: full or part time, amount of time devoted to the program in terms of foregone earnings, amount of indebtedness incurred, etc.

o What are the general demographics of these students?

Additionally, it is felt that Higher Education program curricula could be better evaluated if answers to the following questions were found:

o What is the general reason or goal for students to major in Higher Education?

o What are the specific skills that students are looking to gain or improve from their education?

o What strengths do students see in their current programs?

o What are the perceived weaknesses that students see in their programs?

o What are the long and short term career goals of these students?

o Which courses do students regard as most relevant to their current career activities?

These then are the questions that guided the development of the survey form utilized for this study.

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain some insight into these concerns, a survey form was developed. This survey examined the background of Higher Education students in the areas of: education, demographics, occupation, perceptions of their programs, and

career goals. The questionnaire was pretested with students in the Professional Studies Program at Iowa State University. The 18 largest Higher Education doctoral programs in the United States were identified from the fourth biennial survey of Higher Education programs conducted by ASHE and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education (1984). Telephone calls to the heads of these programs elicited the names of faculty teaching courses in Fall 1985 and the approximate enrollments for each course. A letter requesting the faculty member's participation by distribution and return of the surveys was then sent to each faculty scheduled to teach courses in Higher Education for Fall 1985. Care was taken to assure that students responded only once to the survey. The end results were that 650 usable questionnaires were returned for analysis, a 66% rate of return.

The results of this study were then compared with the results of two previous studies on Higher Education programs: Fife (1983) and Crosson and Nelson (1984), the results of which were both presented at ASHE conferences in 1984 and 1985.

FINDINGS

Responses were received from the following 18 Higher Education doctoral programs:

University of Arizona

Arizona State

University of California at Los Angeles

George Washington University

University of Florida
Southern Illinois University
Indiana University
Iowa State University
Boston College
Michigan State University
University of Michigan
New York University
Columbia University-Teachers College
Pennsylvania State University
University of Pittsburgh
Vanderbilt University-George Peabody College
College of William and Mary
West Virginia University

The results will focus on three areas relevant to the questions guiding this study:

- 1) Student profiles
- 2) Student expectations
- 3) Student satisfaction

STUDENT PROFILES

Characteristics

Students in Higher Education programs are predominately Caucasian (78%), U.S. citizens (92%), in their mid-30's (mean=34.3), and the female/male distribution tilts toward the

female with 58%. These findings show some change over the findings of two previous studies that dealt with programs in Higher Education.

In the 1983 study conducted by Fife, 49.4% of the students responding to a student characteristics survey were female; in Crosson and Nelson's 1984 program description study, 50.5% of the students enrolled were female. The composition of the students racially has also shifted, although not as significantly. In 1983, the minority share of programs was 14.5%; in 1984, and this study finds the non-Caucasian population to be at 22%. Average student age has stayed relatively stable: 33.8 was the average age of a student in 1983; 34.3 in this survey. Charts 1 and 2 illustrate these changes in composition of the typical class of Higher Education students.

Insert Charts 1 and 2 About Here

Implications: For the faculty instructing these classes, these findings come as no surprise. It would a difficult task to describe marketing strategies which might enhance the potential in this market shift, although student response in this study indicated a notable preference for the addition of more female and minority members to the faculty. Here the literature on role-modeling as it effects recruitment and retention might be examined (Blackwell, 1981).

ENROLLMENT TRENDS BY SEX HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

FEMALE



MALE

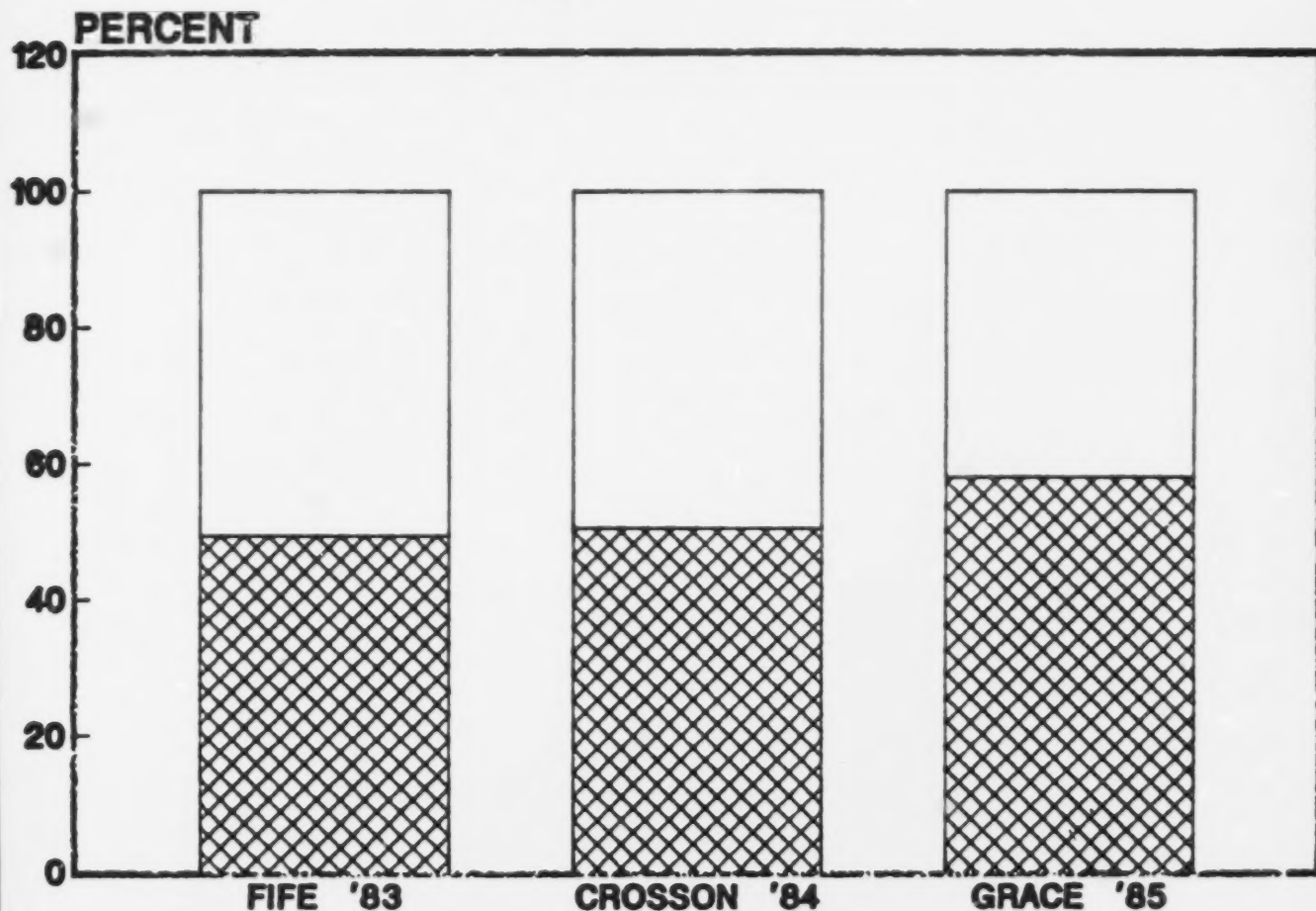
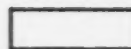


CHART 1

ENROLLMENT TRENDS BY RACE HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

CAUCASIAN



MINORITY

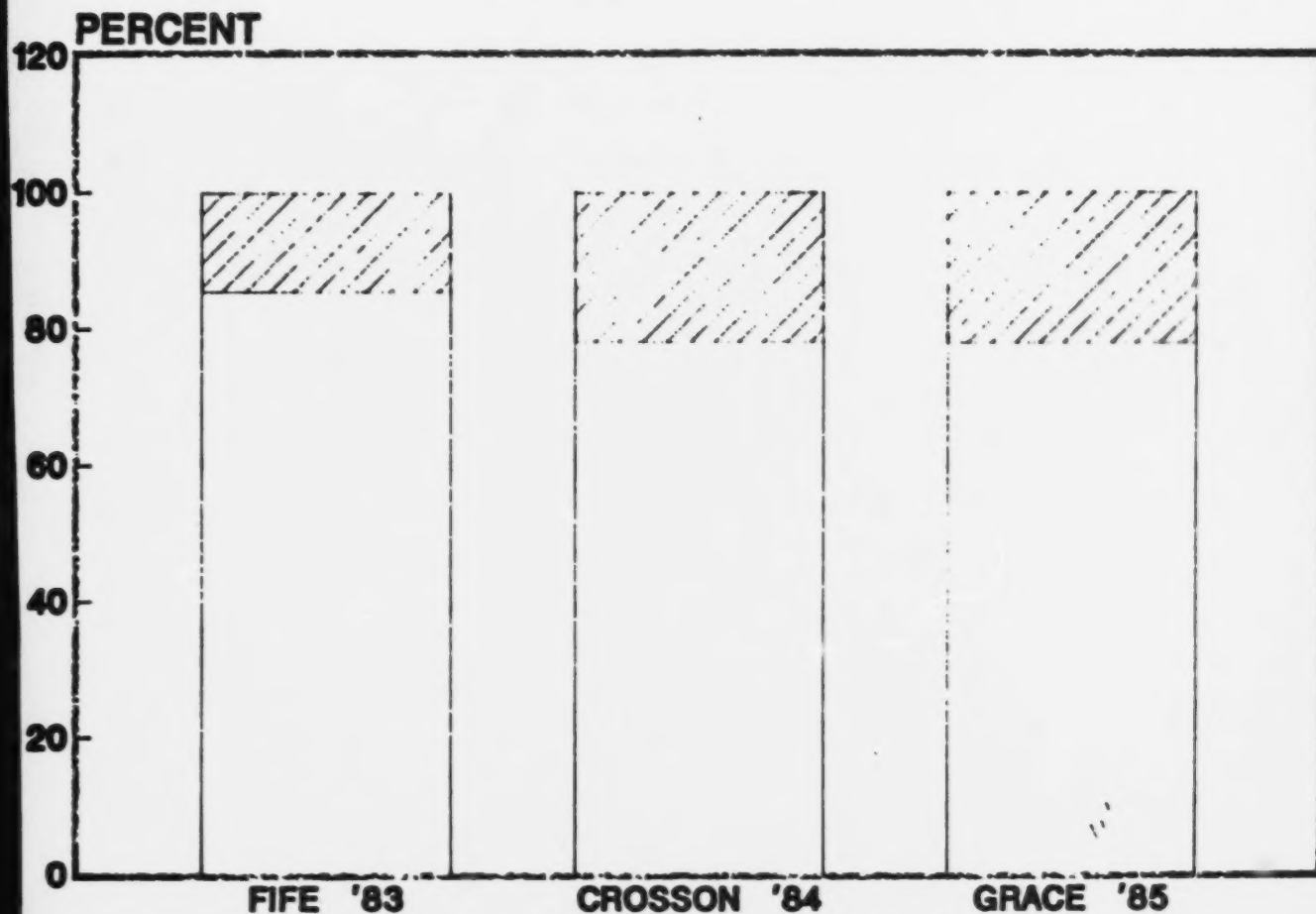


CHART 2

Academic Background

In this study, 54% of the students had bachelor degree majors in the liberal arts, 21% in education; in 1983, only 40.4% of the students had backgrounds in the liberal arts, 19.7 in education. In 1983, 26.5% of the students in Higher Education had academic backgrounds in math, science, engineering, or health sciences; in 1984, this percent had dropped to 12. Chart 3 illustrates this change in bachelor's degree background of students.

Insert Chart 3 About Here

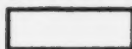
In contrast to the bachelor's degree, 79% of the students surveyed in 1985 have masters' work in education or the liberal arts. 43% reported no master's work previously or a master's in Higher Education. This contrasts with the 1983 percentage of 84.1 with backgrounds in those fields.

An additional change worth mentioning is the decrease in the number of health-related degreed students in programs. In 1983, 14.5% of the students surveyed claimed a bachelor's degree in the health-related fields; by 1985, this percentage had dropped to 10.

Implications: We should continue to seek other than traditional markets in terms of undergraduate majors. Additionally, a liaison with those departments on campus from which an increasing number of majors are being drawn, i.e., library science, health sciences, should be developed.

**BACHELOR'S DEGREE MAJOR
HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS**

LIB. ARTS



MATH/SCI

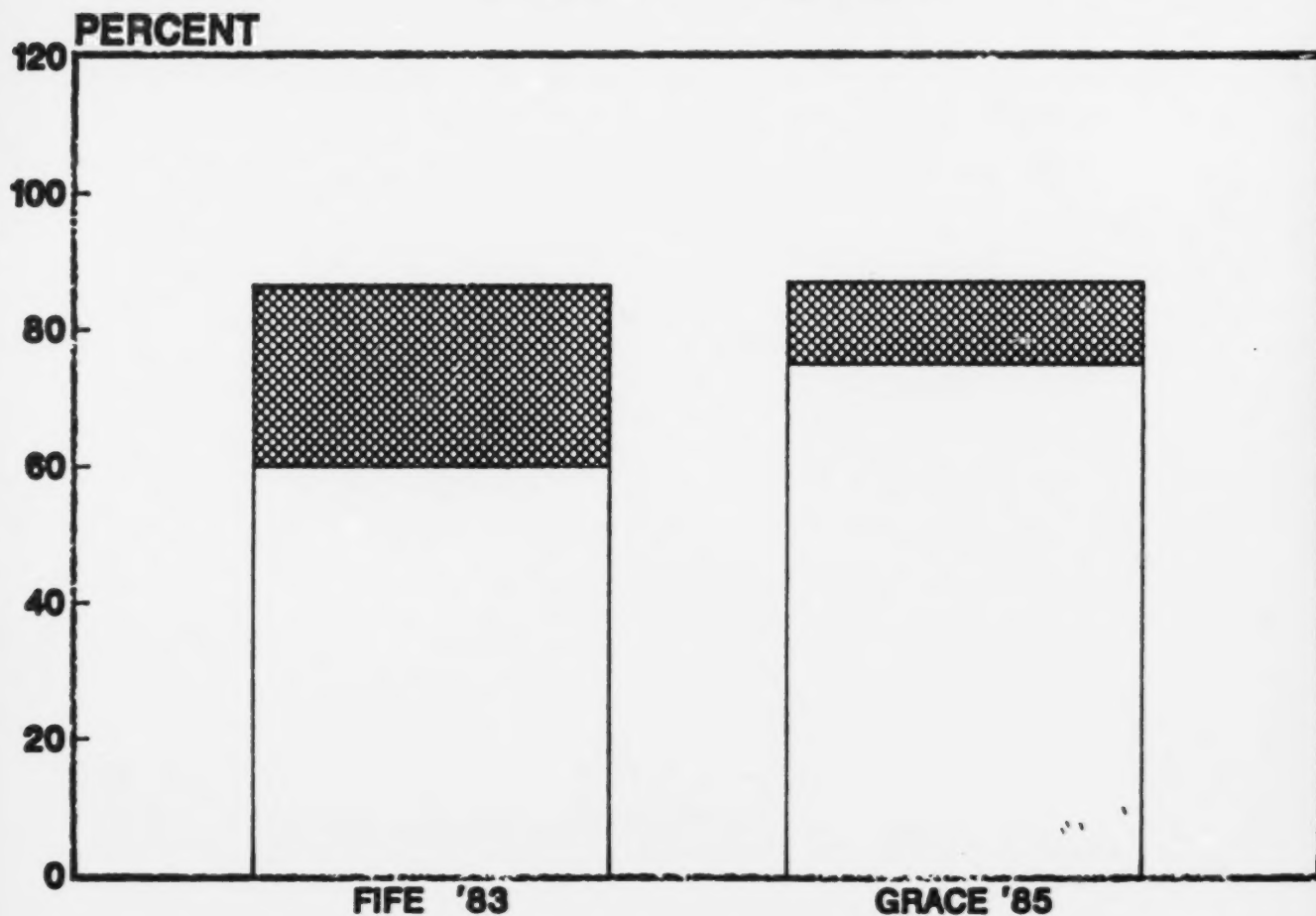


CHART 3

Background Measures

In terms of background measures, several differences can be noted. The mean grade point average (GPA) for the baccalaureate degree in the 1983 study was 3.1 on a 4 point scale; it had gone up slightly to 3.2 by 1985. In 1985, students reported a mean grade point average for master's work of 3.61, with an average graduate record exam (GRE) score of 1190, and a Miller Analogý Test score of 72.5. In the 1983 study, the average master's GPA was reported to be 3.64; the GRE, 1052; and the Miller, 60. Chart 4 illustrates some of these changes in background measures.

Insert Chart 4 About Here

Implications: The GRE performance might indicate that a better prepared student is applying for the program and that faculty might do well to recruit students using the scores sent routinely to graduate colleges by ETS.

Occupational Background

As to be expected, the majority of students enter programs with an employment background in education, with 68.0% indicating that their most recent or current position was at a collegiate institution. The second most cited area of employment was at the K-12 level, with 8%. In 1983, 56.6 % indicated their most recent positions were with postsecondary institutions, 13.1% at the K-12 level.

Students in Higher Education programs do not enter programs until they have been in the workplace for several years. The

BACKGROUND MEASURES HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

1983

1985

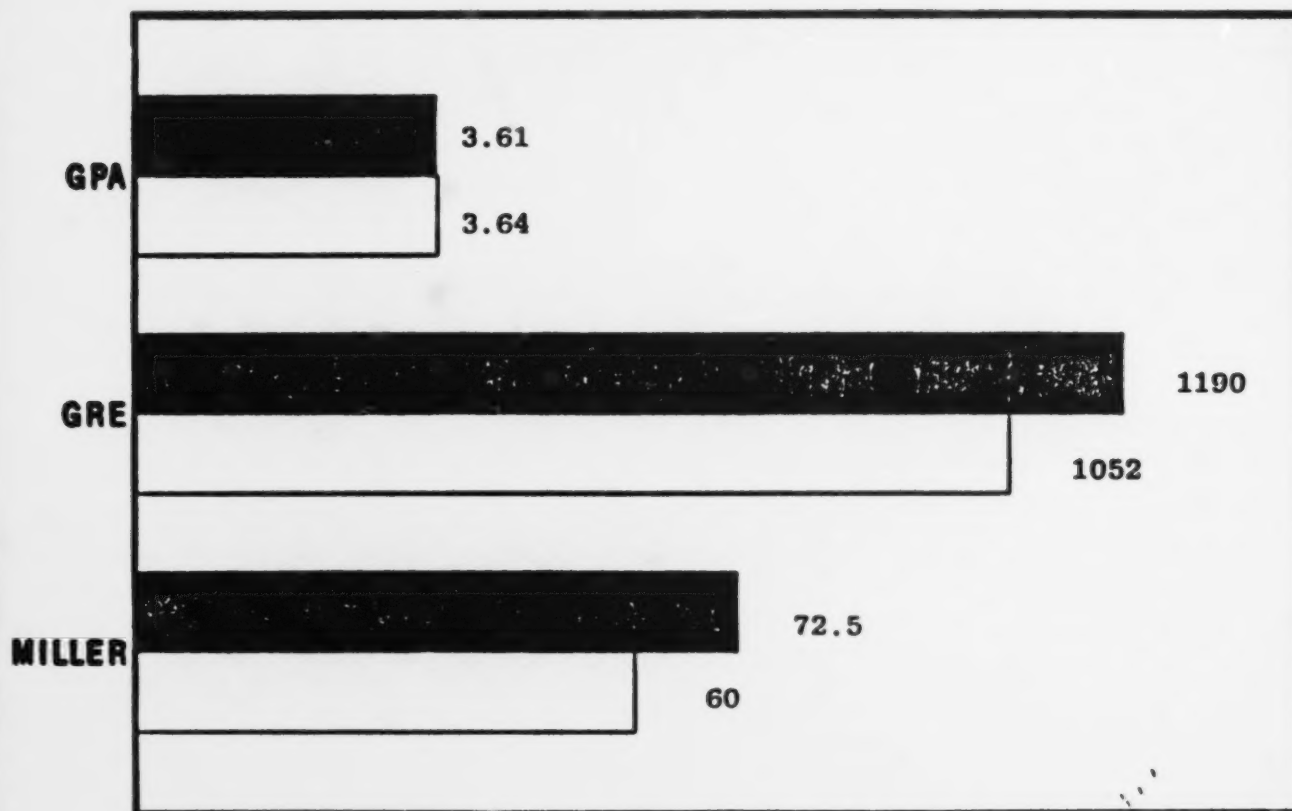


CHART 4

usual number of years since receiving the master's was seven. In 1983 this number was reported as 7.5 years. Chart 5 illustrates some of these changes.

Insert Chart 5 About Here

Implications: In terms of recruitment, persons currently employed in higher education or in K-12 schools are appropriate markets for career-change schooling considering the current occupational backgrounds of program students.

Program Background

Most students surveyed were still in the early part of their degree programs, most having completed less than 25 credits. It is important to survey these students since the first part of graduate study is usually marked by high attrition.

Enrollment Status

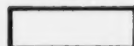
In 1983, 51.3 regarded themselves as part-time students; in 1984, 66.3 reported this status; in 1985, 52% were enrolled part-time.

Implications: Part timers continue to be a significant part of student bodies in these programs; the needs of the part time student in terms of scheduling and long range curricular decisions are obvious.

Sixty-two percent of the students responding in 1985 were pursuing the doctorate; 37% were master's students. In Crosson and Nelson's study, 72.2% were doctoral students, and in Fife's

**MOST RECENT POSITION
HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

1983



1985

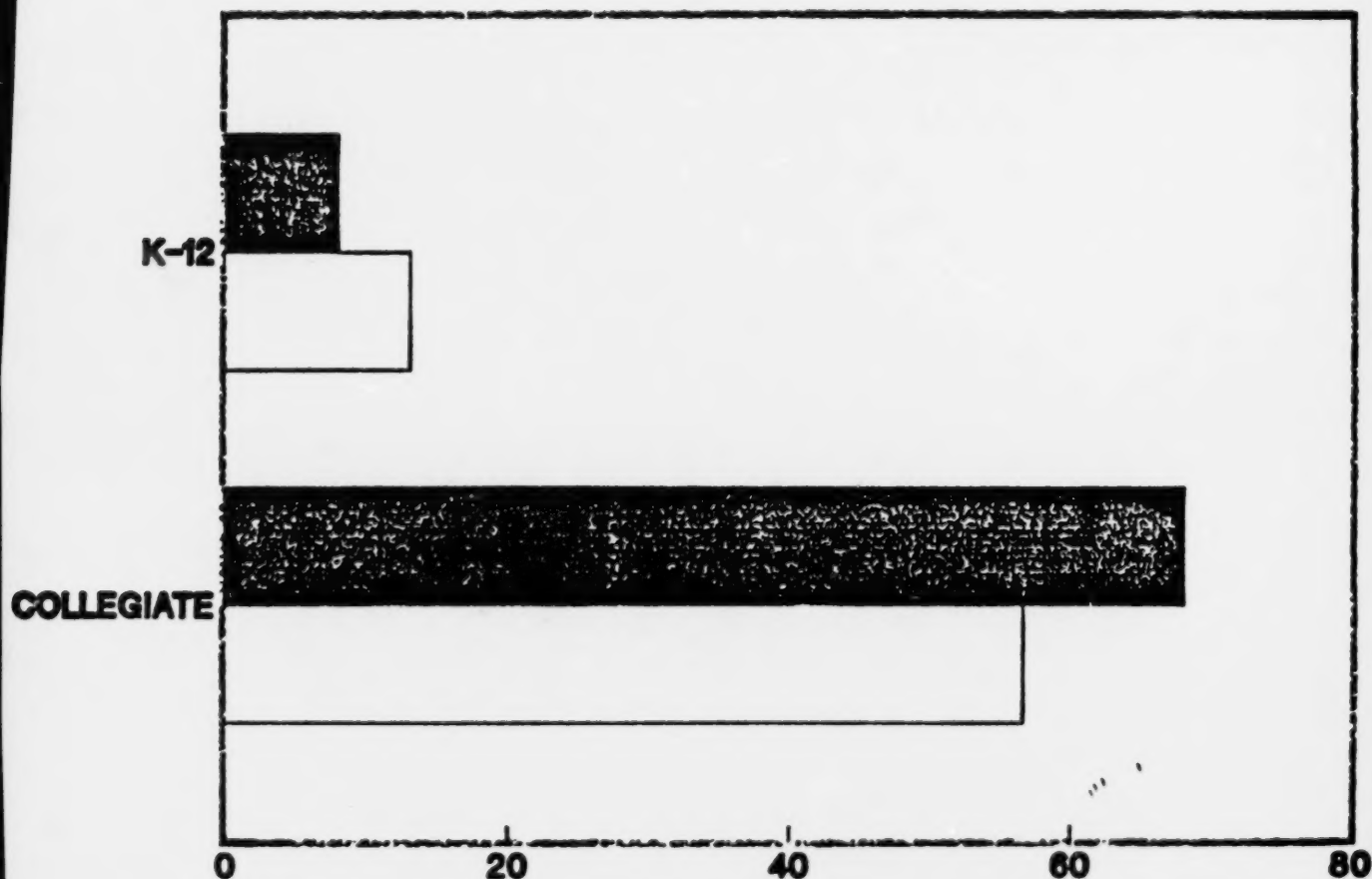
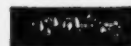


CHART 5

1983 study, 66% were pursuing the doctorate. Chart 6 illustrates the change in enrollment status.

Insert Chart 6 About Here

Implications: The evidence from this study indicates that there were more apparently terminal master's students in classes, another implication for marketing and for curricula content. Students pursuing only a master's degree will need a different set of skills than those entering a program with the intention of obtaining a doctorate, and therefore a different curriculum.

Concentration

The majority of students (57%) were majoring in Higher Education Administration, with 20% majoring in Student Personnel work, the second largest identifiable subgroup of major concentration. Chart 7 illustrates this breakdown.

Insert Chart 7 About Here

Location

65% reported that they were already geographically present. In 1983, only 62.7% were in residence. Chart 8 illustrates this trend.

Insert Chart 8 About Here

Financing

In terms of financing their programs, only 11% took loans, and 15.5% had part of their expenses covered by an institution

DEGREE PROGRAM HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

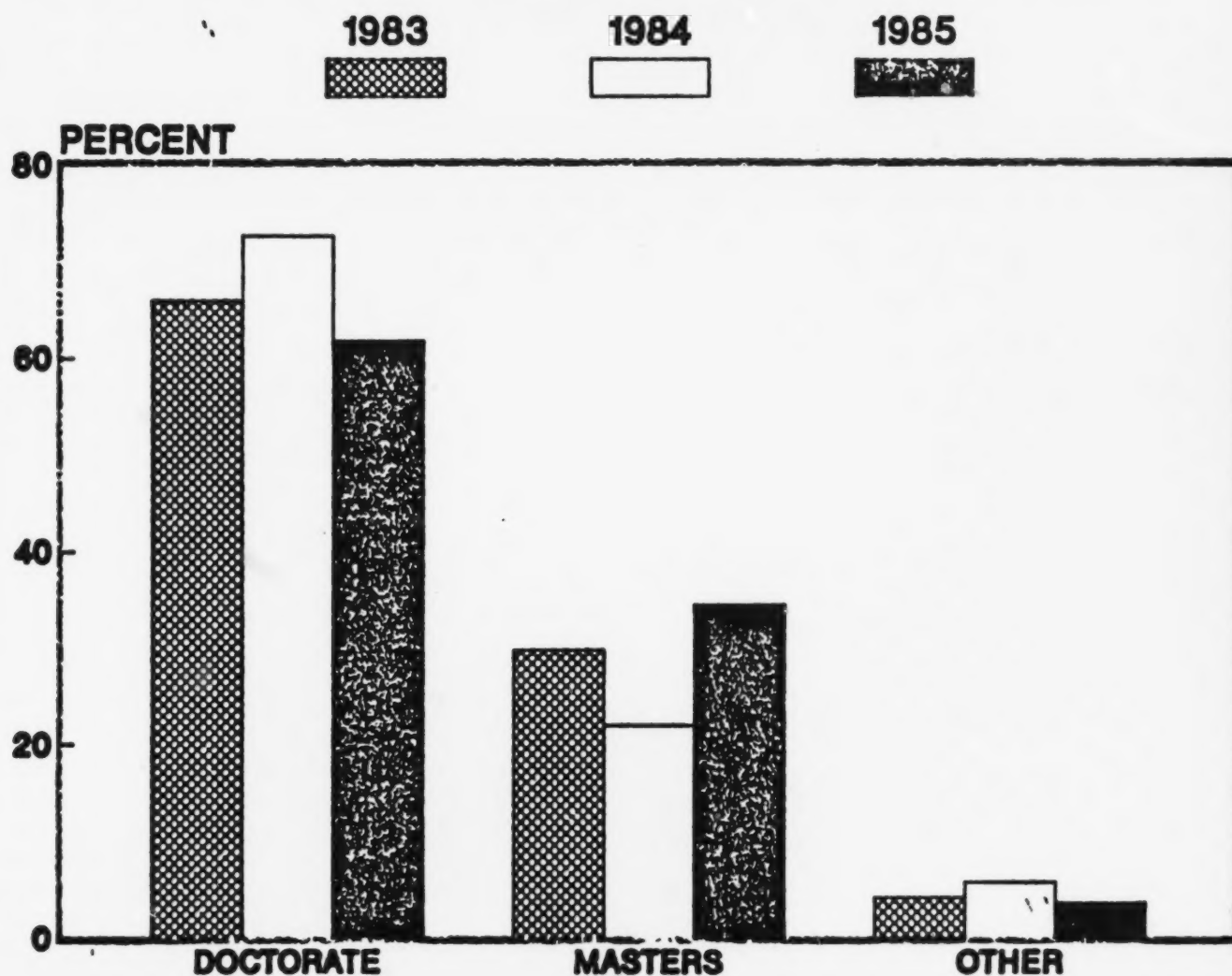


CHART 6

**MAJOR CONCENTRATION
HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS 1985**

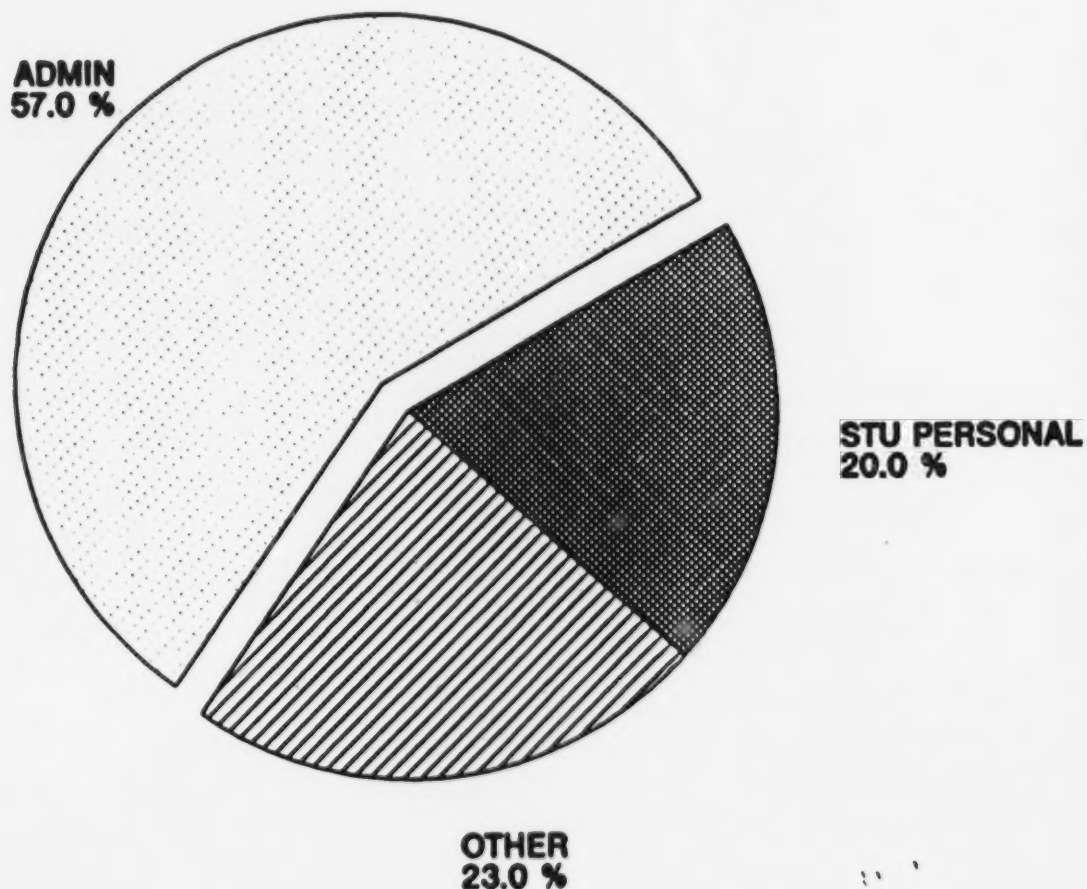
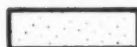


CHART 7

GEOGRAPHIC ACCESSIBILITY HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS 1985

1983



1985

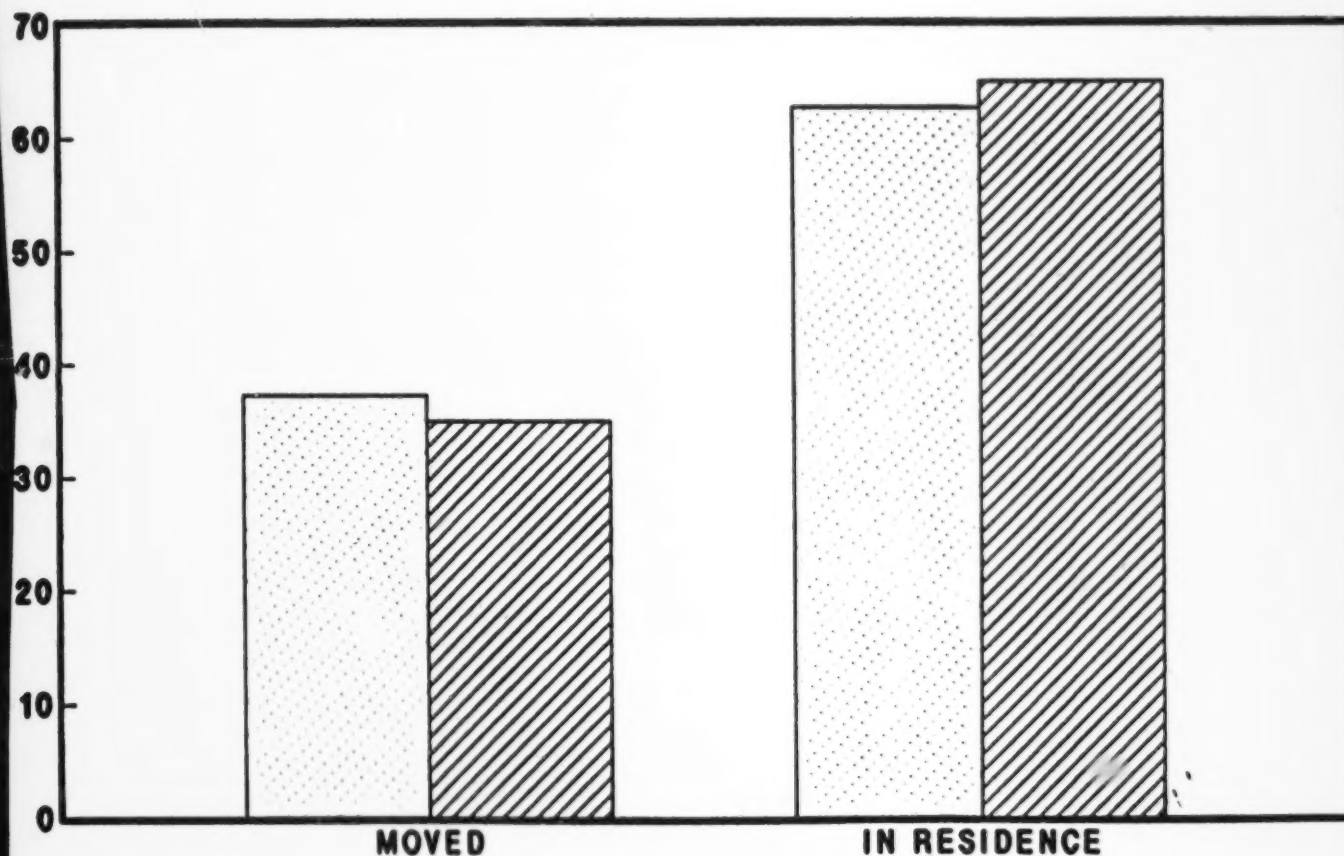


CHART 8

grant or assistantship. 37% financed their study through work or savings. Chart 9 depicts the breakdown of support of graduate study.

Insert Chart 9 About Here

Implications: The availability of programs geographically and of financial aid figure into student decision to undertake study in these programs. Additionally, a liaison with those departments on campus from which increasing number of majors are drawn, e.g., health sciences, library science, should be developed. As industry has developed educational programs to increase the skills of its employees, Higher Education programs can act as internal trainers within their own and neighboring institutions.

Recruitment

Of particular importance to this study was what attracted students to the classes. Over 82% heard about programs from friends or colleagues, and 46% enrolled because of the quality of the faculty and reputation of the school or program. These findings are similar to the 1983 findings with relatively the same percentage of students finding out about the program through colleagues and advertisements, and a similar motivation for enrollment. Charts 10 and 11 illustrate these trends.

Insert Charts 10 and 11 About Here

HOW FINANCED BY STUDENTS (1985) HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

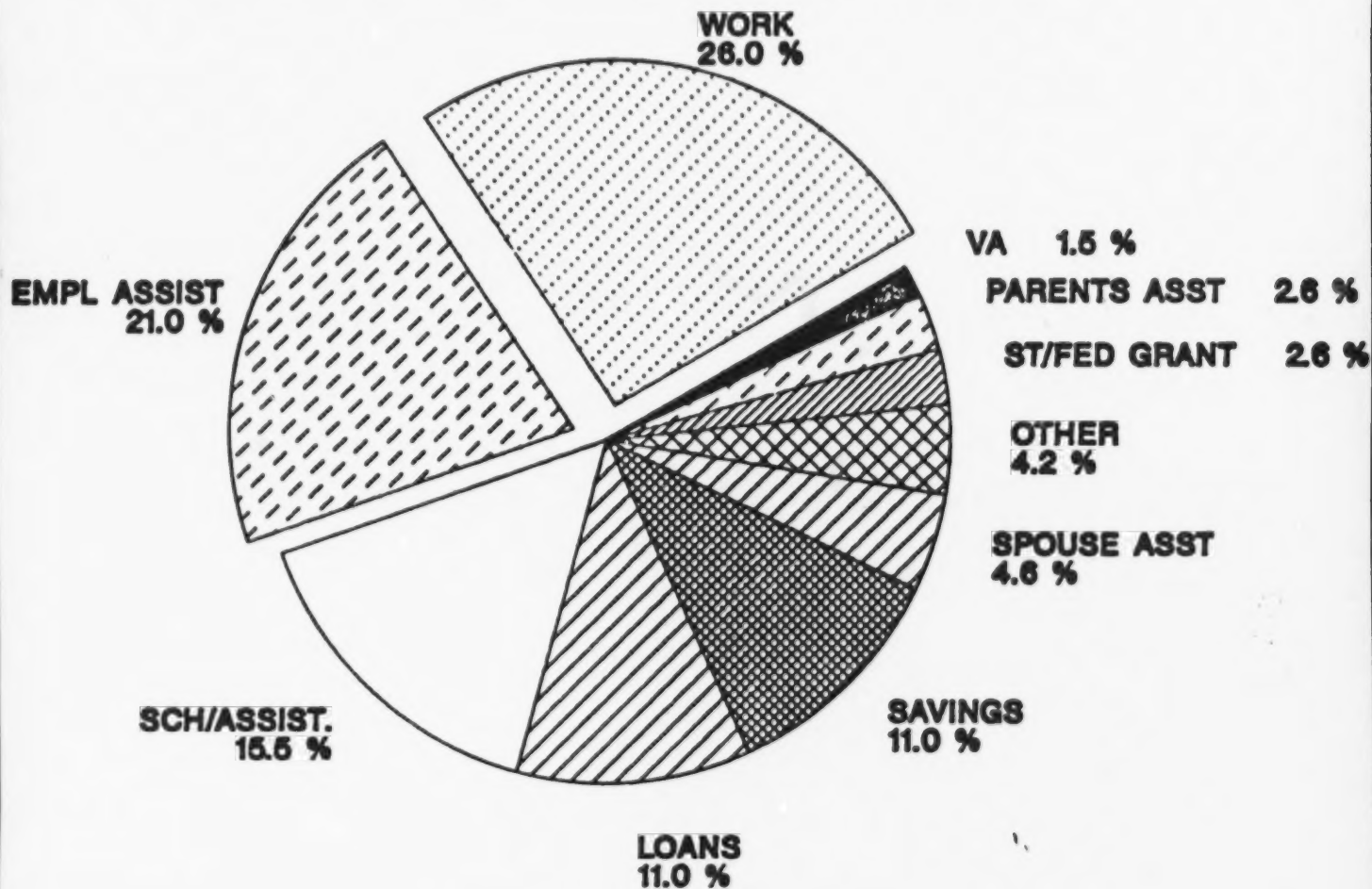


CHART 9

STUDENT EXPECTATION: RECRUITMENT HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

1983



1985

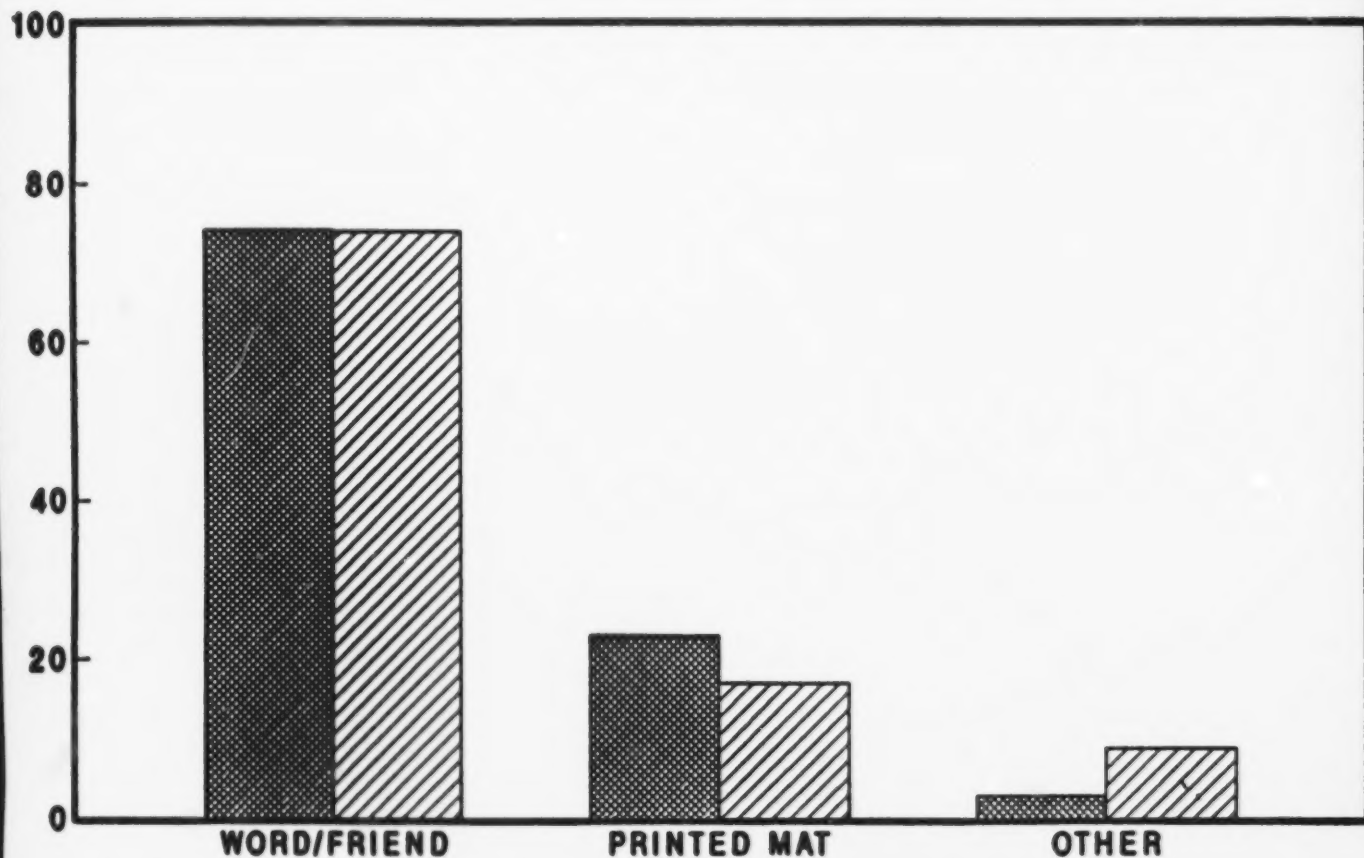


CHART 10

STUDENT MOTIVATION: ENROLLMENT HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

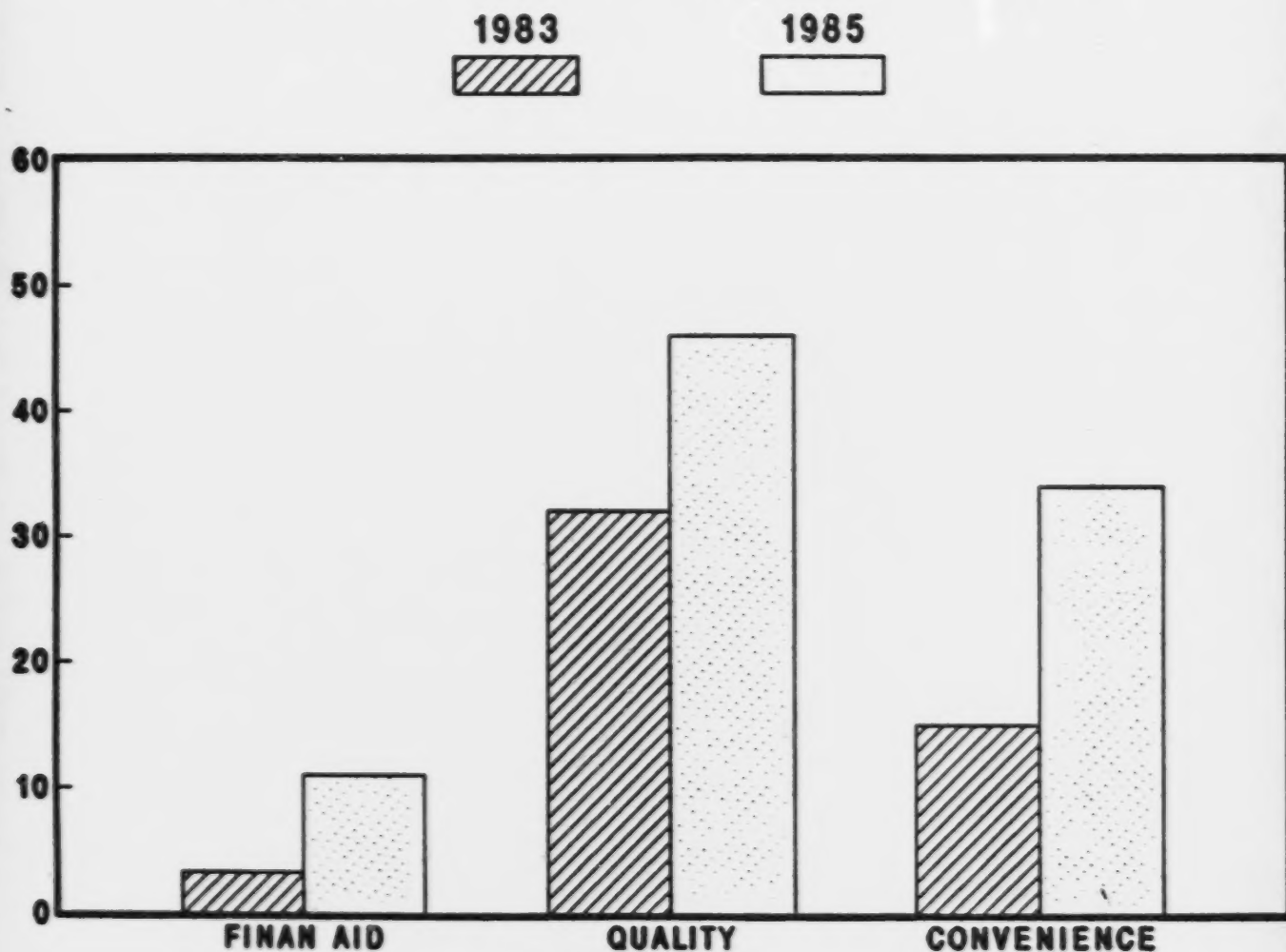


CHART 11

Implications: The implication of the necessity for a good alumni or program newsletter is worth noting relative to these findings.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Skills

47% of the respondents classified their tasks in their most recent position as administrative; 27% responded that teaching was their main responsibility. There was not significant indication that these teaching responsibilities were at the two-year level.

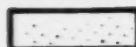
However, an interesting percentage of students enrolled to develop their teaching skills: 13.8, while only 26.9% said they hoped to develop or strengthen management or administrative skills through the program. The skills generally associated with the higher learning, such as reasoning, analytical, thinking, and conceptualizing, were sought only by a small percent of the students. Chart 12 illustrates these expectations.

Insert Chart 12 About Here

Implications: Since a fair portion of students entering these programs have liberal arts backgrounds, can the assumption be made that these skills are already attained? If so, should programs be marketed to emphasize a more practical, skill oriented outcome?

EXPECTATIONS OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

1983



1985

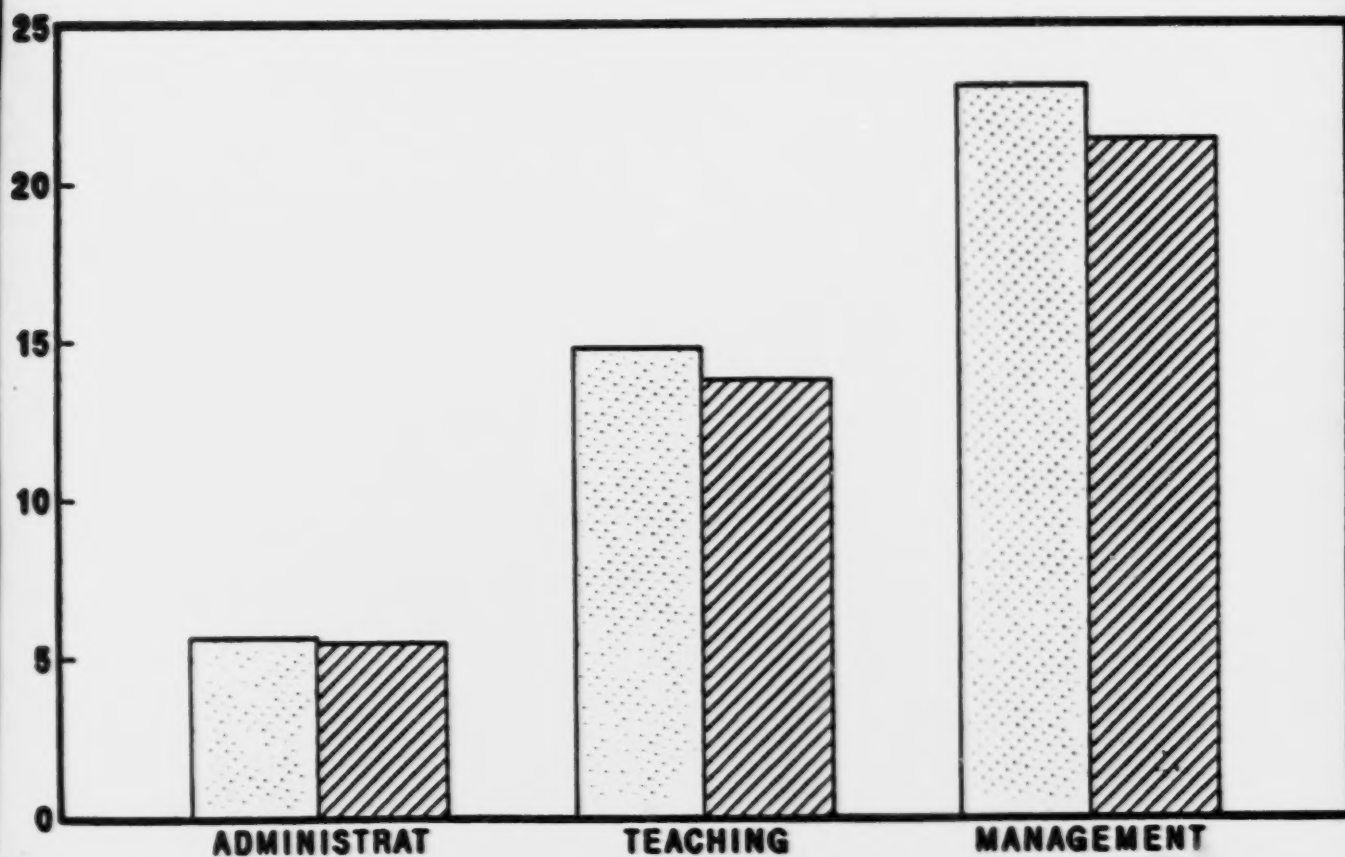


CHART 12

A surprising number of students (approaching 20%) were seeking computer skills through programs, yet the computer course was not mentioned as significant to their current positions. Administration and Organization was the perceived most effective course, followed by history and philosophy courses and by student development. Teaching courses were mentioned by only 11% of the students responding.

Implications: Some examination of program idiosyncrasies versus these preferences should be undertaken. Since a notable number of students are attending a program with expectations of developing teaching skills, although seeking administrative positions, it is critical that programs strive to adjust student expectations or clarify career paths for these students who are enrolled in this non-discipline-based doctorate program. It seems appropriate that curricula should contain courses in both administrative theory and skill development for those who are able to obtain positions that will call for the use of both, especially the terminal master's student. Additionally, perhaps a separate track for teaching at the community college will become more prevalent due to student expectation of this program leading to teaching competence, and the discipline-based Ph.D. being the union card for 4 year institution teaching.

Strengths/Weaknesses

The strengths and weaknesses of the program can be used in curriculum evaluation. In response to what students felt were strengths of programs, faculty, curriculum, and flexibility were

regarded highest. Program direction and advisement ranked high as weaknesses.

Implications: Without consistency over time, a program curriculum does not move along the continuum of professionalization (Grace, 1984). Many students criticized the direction, support, and administration of these programs. Aside from this being an anomaly in terms of the subject major in these programs, faculty need to consider the students' frustration with these weaknesses. Additionally, a program should be more than just a collection of courses. If this is an emerging area of professional studies, then organization and sequence of courses should be more evident to students as they plan their programs. The program should be a sequencing of knowledge and skills aimed for a higher level of attainment.

Career Goals

The success of an academic program can be measured in both the long and the short run. Therefore, it is important to consider students' goals on both time frames. While over 22% of the students indicated that they expected to teach as a result of their studies, 16.5% had as an ultimate goal teaching on the postsecondary level. Over 80% wanted to do administrative work after graduation; 62% wanted this as an ultimate goal. Chart 13 illustrates these expectations.

Insert Chart 13 About Here

STUDENT EXPECTATION: ULTIMATE CAREER GOAL HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

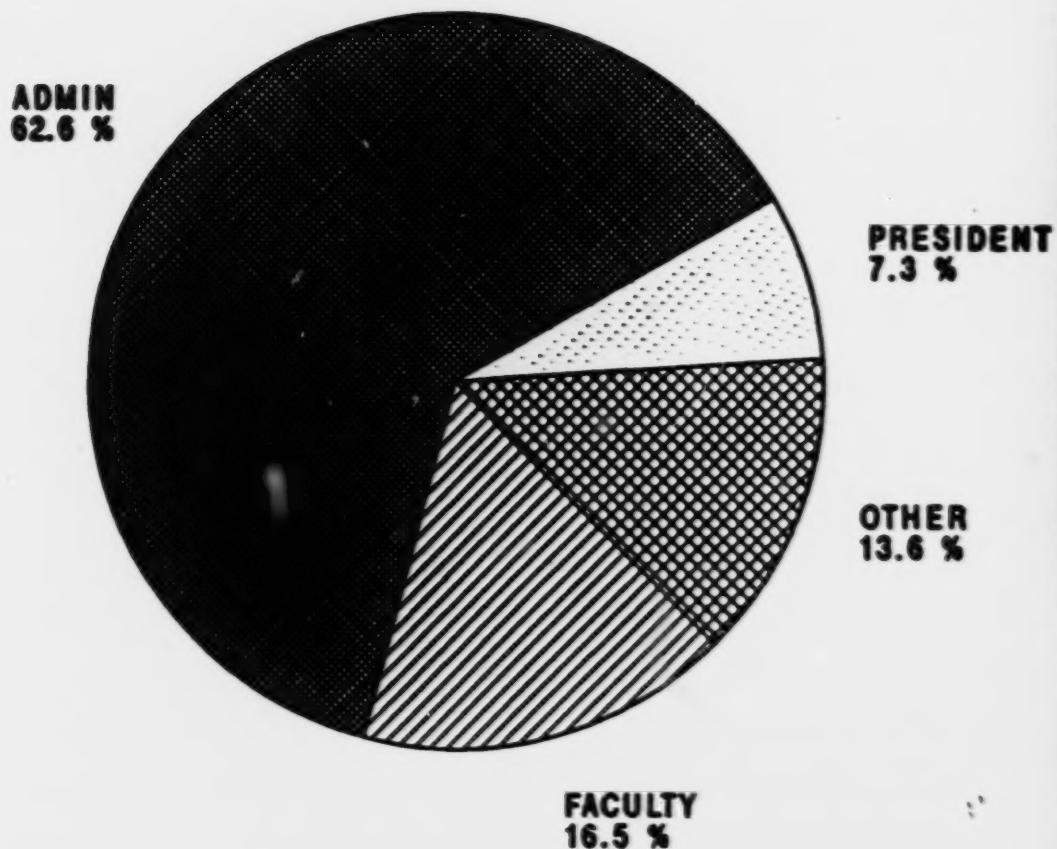


CHART 13

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study reveal a few surprises to those of us who teach. The changes in demographics in terms of race and sex are obvious although we have probably only made a dent in marketing with these profiles in mind. We should consider finding ways of recruiting those students who are regarded as being more able as measured by standardized tests. And it is to our great advantage to recruit within our own institutions and geographic areas. However, other findings of this study require some thought in terms of overall intentions and marketing.

There exists a discrepancy between student skill and job expectations and course and curriculum. Faculty of these programs should examine where the adjustment should be made.

This very simple study, like all perceptual surveys, is but a snapshot of reality. It does provide some insight into program evaluation and marketing. For more precise examination and conclusions about students and their characteristics and expectations, more longitudinal studies are necessary. Since there seems to be at least an relatively high demand for students trained for administrative tasks, it is to the advantage of programs to carefully evaluate their cohort and the preparation of future leaders of postsecondary education.

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